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NSPI Supports Forces Battling Federal Control of Standards

WASHINGTON — The National Swimming Pool Institute — and friends — are waging war against Senate Bill No. 825 which would set up a government agency to control standards development and create mandatory programs to accredit testing laboratories.

NSPI lacked the resources to testify for the industry but contributed information to the Chamber Construction Action Council and supported testimony against S. 825. Director of Technical Services Larry Paulick said, "Our industry views this as a serious encroachment by the government into our private affairs. This is the first step toward a government takeover of the voluntary standards process."

Opponents of the bill found a champion in Duane Pearsall, president of Statitrol Corporation, Lakewood, Colo. who spoke on behalf of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, as a member of its Small Business Council. In an April 18 appearance before a Senate subcommittee on anti-trust and monopoly, he said, "I always thought that in our market system products are invented, produced and sold by enterprising people. It is frightening to learn that there is serious consideration of plans like this to replace market decisions with government decisions. And I will not be consoled by any suggestions that S. 825 is designed to improve the market system. A few more 'improvements' like this and there will be very little left of the free market system."

The bill claims that the present system impedes efficient use of existing standards by government agencies. Pearsall protested this assumption. "Up to now," he commented, "I

believed that goods were produced and marketed for the benefit of the public, mainly private people. I did not know that my function was to serve the government. Naively, I thought it was the other way around."

In denying that the existing private standards system is often misused to suppress competition, Pearsall cited the example of the battery powered smoke detector which his firm manufactures. He pointed out that in three years the number of firms producing detectors has grown from less than five to about 50 — consequently reducing consumer prices.

Pearsall was also dubious about the bill's proposed laboratory accreditation process. Companies, he believed, would set up their own testing laboratories as subsidiaries — demanding a substantial capital outlay only a large firm could make. He suggested the minimum needed capital would be three to five million dollars.

Paulick, too, believes that the bill would pose a hardship for small business. "Another federal control of the standard process will only further stifle small business people," he said.

NSPI develops its residential and public pool standards through the voluntary standard process. According to Paulick, the method works well. "Our voluntary standards benefit the builder and consumer by increasing product convenience and by specifying levels of safety and performance.

"We have been developing standards since 1958 and do not need government intervention at this late stage of the game."